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ABSTRACT

This report presents the results of the 10th annual National Student Satisfaction Study conducted to determine the level of importance that students place on areas of their student experience and how satisfied students are that institutions are meeting their expectations. The study uses the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) to identify student concerns that are truly affecting student success. The 2003 report contains data from 796 colleges and universities that used the SSI between fall 2000 and spring 2003. The student populations by institution type are: 107,810 from 4-year public institutions; 240,704 from 4-year private institutions; 237,133 from 2-year community, junior, and technical colleges; and 38,328 from career and private schools. The SSI consists of more than 70 items covering the full range of college experiences. Inventory items from the 12 or 13 (4-year schools) scales are presented with three scores for each item: an importance score, a satisfaction score, and a performance gap score. Four tables summarize the importance, satisfaction, and performance gap findings for the SSI scales by institution type. Strengths and challenges are then summarized in narrative form for each institution type. Five-year trend information is presented in table form for each type of institution studied. (SLD)

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2003 National Student Satisfaction Report

Study Conducted by Noel-Levitz

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2003 National Student Satisfaction Report

Study Conducted by Noel-Levitz

Rationale for Satisfaction Measurement

Student satisfaction studies are self-examinations that enable institutions to measure their students' satisfaction with a wide range of college experiences. By taking "soundings" of student satisfaction, institutions are able to pinpoint their institutional strengths as well as areas in need of improvement.

Traditionally, colleges and universities have measured one dimension of student satisfaction only. However, for greatest impact and accuracy, satisfaction should be viewed within the context of student expectations (levels of importance). For example, the quality of food service and the use of student activity fees repeatedly surface as areas of high dissatisfaction for students. But when asked to indicate the importance of these areas to their overall educational experience, students rate food service and activity fees relatively low. Traditionally, parking has also been an area of high dissatisfaction as well, and the level of importance indicated for parking varies by type of institution. Students at primarily residential campuses rate parking with lower importance than students at institutions with a majority of commuter students.

The Study

This report reveals the results of the tenth annual National Student Satisfaction Study conducted by Noel-Levitz to determine the level of importance that students place on the areas of their student experience and how satisfied students are that institutions are meeting their expectations. This two-dimensional approach uses the Student Satisfaction Inventory™ (SSI) to identify student concerns that are truly affecting student success. By revealing which aspects of campus students consider most and least important, along with how satisfied students are, this inventory provides a vehicle for institutions to set priorities that are *closely aligned* with those of their students. This report looks at the combination of the data to identify strengths (high importance and high satisfaction) and challenges (high importance and low satisfaction) by institution type.

The Source of Data

The 2003 National Student Satisfaction Report represents data from 796 colleges and universities representing four-year public; four-year private; two-year community, junior and technical institutions; and two-year career and private schools that utilized the Student Satisfaction Inventory with all or part of their student body between the fall of 2000 and the spring of 2003.

The student populations by institutional type include 107,810 from four-year publics; 240,704 from four-year privates; 237,133 from two-year community, junior, and technical colleges; and 38,328 from career and private schools.

The Instrument

The Student Satisfaction Inventory, from which the data were collected for this report, consists of over 70 items that cover the full range of college experiences. Each item is expressed as a statement of expectation. Each statement includes a rating scale of 1 to 7. Students are asked to rate the level of importance they assign to the expectation as well as their level of satisfaction that the expectation is being met.

The inventory findings are then presented with three scores for each item: an importance score, a satisfaction score, and a performance gap score, which is calculated by subtracting the satisfaction score from the importance score. A large performance gap score on an item indicates that the institution is not meeting the expectation; a small gap score indicates that the institution is close to meeting the expectation; and a negative gap score indicates that the institution is exceeding the students' expectations.

The Student Satisfaction Inventory comes in several versions: one for four-year institutions; one for community, junior, and technical colleges; and another for two-year career and private schools. Versions

Companion Studies

See the final two sections of this report for:

1) a national study that reveals institutional priorities from the perspective of faculty, staff, and administrators with results from 248 institutions
2) a national study that reveals the priorities of adult students with results from 103 institutions

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specific to Canadian four-year and two-year institutions are also available. A sample of the SSI items representing a broad array of issues relating to campus programs and services is presented at the end of this report.

The Scales

The items on the Student Satisfaction Inventory have been analyzed statistically and conceptually to create scales. The scales provide composite scores that allow for an overview of the data. The scales are as follows:

- ***Academic Advising Effectiveness** (four-year schools) **and Academic Advising and Counseling Effectiveness** (two-year and career/private schools)* assess the comprehensiveness of the academic advising program, evaluating advisors' knowledge, competence, approachability, and personal concern for students.
- ***Academic Services** (two-year and career/private schools)* assesses services students utilize to achieve their academic goals. These services include the library, computer labs, tutoring, and study areas.
- ***Campus Climate*** measures the extent to which the institution provides experiences that promote a sense of campus pride and belonging.
- ***Campus Life** (four-year schools)* assesses the effectiveness of student life programs offered by the institution, covering issues ranging from athletics to residence life. This scale also assesses campus policies and procedures to determine students' perceptions of their rights and responsibilities.
- ***Campus Support Services*** assesses the quality of support programs and services.
- ***Concern for the Individual*** assesses the institution's commitment to treating each student as an individual. Included in this assessment are those groups who frequently deal with students on a personal level (i.e., faculty, advisors, counselors, residence hall staff, etc.).
- ***Instructional Effectiveness*** measures students' academic experience, the curriculum, and the campus's overriding commitment to academic excellence.
- ***Recruitment and Financial Aid Effectiveness** (four-year schools) **and Admissions and Financial Aid Effectiveness** (two-year and career/private schools)* measure the extent to which admissions counselors are competent and knowledgeable, along with students' perceptions of the effectiveness and availability of financial aid programs.
- ***Registration Effectiveness*** assesses issues associated with registration and billing and the extent to which the registration process is smooth and effective.
- ***Responsiveness to Diverse Populations*** assesses the institution's commitment to specific groups of students enrolled at the institution (e.g., underrepresented populations, students with disabilities, commuters, part-time students, and older, returning learners). Please note that this scale captures only a satisfaction score.
- ***Safety and Security*** measures the institution's responsiveness to students' personal safety and security on the campus.
- ***Service Excellence*** measures the areas of campus where quality service and personal concern for students are rated most and least favorably.
- ***Student Centeredness*** measures the institution's attitude toward students and the extent to which they feel welcome and valued.

Analysis of the Scales

The best place to begin is by looking at the big picture and understanding the areas on campus that matter most to students. The following four tables summarize the importance, satisfaction, and performance gap findings for the 12 scales by institution type. These are listed in order of importance.

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2003 Scales: *four-year private institutions*

Scale	**Importance Mean**	Satisfaction Mean	*Performance Gap Mean*
Instructional Effectiveness	**6.32**	5.22	*1.10*
Academic Advising	**6.24**	5.19	*1.05*
Safety and Security	**6.16**	4.69	*1.47*
Registration Effectiveness	**6.13**	4.88	*1.25*
Recruitment and Financial Aid	**6.13**	4.81	*1.32*
Concern for the Individual	**6.12**	5.05	*1.07*
Student Centeredness	**6.12**	5.15	*0.97*
Campus Climate	**6.11**	5.07	*1.04*
Campus Support Services	**5.98**	5.10	*0.88*
Service Excellence	**5.97**	4.91	*1.06*
Campus Life	**5.64**	4.70	*0.94*
Responsiveness to Diverse Populations	—	4.94	—

(7 = very important/very satisfied 1 = not important/not satisfied at all)

2003 Scales: *four-year public institutions*

Scale	**Importance Mean**	Satisfaction Mean	*Performance Gap Mean*
Academic Advising	**6.29**	5.08	*1.21*
Instructional Effectiveness	**6.28**	5.09	*1.19*
Safety and Security	**6.26**	4.37	*1.89*
Registration Effectiveness	**6.14**	4.83	*1.31*
Concern for the Individual	**6.04**	4.79	*1.25*
Campus Climate	**6.02**	4.90	*1.12*
Recruitment and Financial Aid	**6.01**	4.66	*1.35*
Student Centeredness	**6.00**	4.93	*1.07*
Campus Support Services	**5.99**	5.09	*0.90*
Service Excellence	**5.95**	4.74	*1.21*
Campus Life	**5.56**	4.71	*0.85*
Responsiveness to Diverse Populations	—	4.94	—

(7 = very important/very satisfied 1 = not important/not satisfied at all)

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2003 Scales: *community, junior, and technical colleges*

Scale	Importance Mean	Satisfaction Mean	*Performance Gap Mean*
Instructional Effectiveness	**6.14**	5.30	*0.84*
Registration Effectiveness	**6.11**	5.30	*0.81*
Academic Advising/Counseling	**6.08**	5.09	*0.99*
Concern for the Individual	**6.04**	5.12	*0.92*
Academic Services	**5.98**	5.28	*0.70*
Safety and Security	**5.95**	4.82	*1.13*
Admissions and Financial Aid	**5.95**	4.97	*0.98*
Campus Climate	**5.90**	5.17	*0.73*
Student Centeredness	**5.90**	5.24	*0.66*
Service Excellence	**5.89**	5.12	*0.77*
Campus Support Services	**5.37**	4.84	*0.53*
Responsiveness to Diverse Populations	—	5.36	—

(7 = very important /very satisfied 1 = not important /not satisfied at all)

2003 Scales: *career and private schools*

Scale	Importance Mean	Satisfaction Mean	*Performance Gap Mean*
Instructional Effectiveness	**6.27**	5.30	*0.97*
Concern for the Individual	**6.21**	5.15	*1.06*
Admissions and Financial Aid	**6.19**	5.11	*1.08*
Academic Advising/Counseling	**6.18**	5.13	*1.05*
Registration Effectiveness	**6.17**	5.27	*0.90*
Campus Climate	**6.16**	5.20	*0.96*
Student Centeredness	**6.16**	5.30	*0.86*
Academic Services	**6.09**	5.02	*1.07*
Service Excellence	**6.07**	5.10	*0.97*
Safety and Security	**6.00**	4.63	*1.37*
Campus Support Services	**5.61**	4.73	*0.88*
Responsiveness to Diverse Populations	—	5.25	—

(7 = very important /very satisfied 1 = not important /not satisfied at all)

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Analysis

It is important that the analysis of the data include all three areas of measurement — importance, satisfaction, and performance gap. Focusing on only one area, such as performance gap, is likely to result in overlooking areas of the campus experience that students value most. A combination of scores provides the most dynamic information for institutions to consider when developing an action agenda.

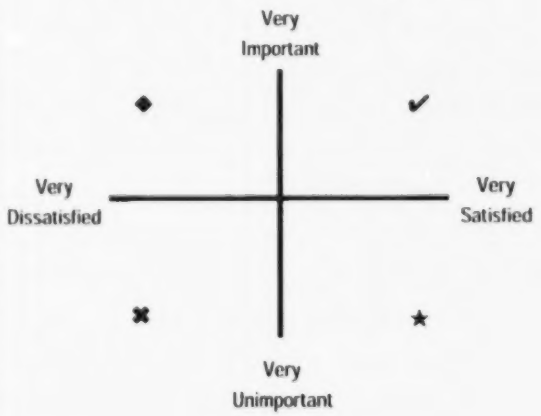
Using the matrix below permits the institution to conceptualize its student satisfaction data by retention priorities (challenges) and marketing opportunities (strengths). In addition, it allows the institution to pinpoint areas where resources can be redirected from areas of low importance to areas of high importance.

Strengths and Challenges

The individual items on the inventory can be analyzed to determine strengths (high importance and high satisfaction). These are the items that the institution can incorporate into their marketing activities, recruiting materials, and internal and external public relations opportunities; and can use to provide positive feedback to the faculty, staff, administration, and students on campus. *Strengths are defined as being above the median in importance and in the top quartile of satisfaction.*

The items can also be analyzed to determine the key challenges (high importance and low satisfaction). These are the key areas that the campus needs to address to improve retention on campus. These are the items where students expect a lot, but where the institu-

Matrix for Prioritizing Action



- ◆ **High importance/low satisfaction** pinpoints areas that should claim the institution's immediate attention, i.e. retention agenda/priorities
- ✔ **High importance/high satisfaction** showcases the institution's areas of strength that should be highlighted in promotional materials
- ✖ **Low importance/low satisfaction** presents an opportunity for the institution to examine those areas that have low status with students
- ★ **Low importance/high satisfaction** suggests areas from which it might be beneficial to redirect institutional resources to areas of higher importance

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tion is currently failing to meet student expectations. The areas of dissatisfaction are prioritized by their importance score so the institution knows it is working in the areas that matter the most to students. *Challenges are defined as being above the median in importance and in the bottom quartile of satisfaction and/or the top quartile of performance gaps.*

Following, the strengths and challenges are presented by each institution type. They are listed in order of importance.

Four-Year Private Colleges and Universities

Strengths (high importance/high satisfaction):

- The content of the courses within my major is valuable.
- The instruction in my major field is excellent.
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field.
- The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent.
- My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major.
- I am able to experience intellectual growth here.
- The campus is safe and secure for all students.
- Major requirements are clear and reasonable.
- My academic advisor is approachable.
- There is a commitment to academic excellence on this campus.
- It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus.
- The campus staff are caring and helpful.
- Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours.
- Students are made to feel welcome on this campus.
- On the whole, the campus is well-maintained.
- This institution has a good reputation within the community.
- Faculty care about me as an individual.

Challenges (high importance/low satisfaction):

- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts.
- Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.
- Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students.
- Adequate financial aid is available for most students.
- There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus.
- Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress in a course.
- Financial aid awards are announced to students in time to be helpful in college planning.
- Financial aid counselors are helpful.
- Security staff respond quickly in emergencies.
- There are adequate services to help me decide upon a career.
- I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information on this campus.
- Billing policies are reasonable.

Four-Year Public Colleges and Universities

Strengths (high importance/high satisfaction):

- The content of the courses within my major is valuable.
- The instruction in my major field is excellent.
- My academic advisor is knowledgeable about requirements in my major.
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their field.
- The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent.
- The campus is safe and secure for all students.
- My academic advisor is approachable.
- There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus.
- Major requirements are clear and reasonable.
- Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours.
- I am able to experience intellectual growth here.
- Computer labs are adequate and accessible.
- It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus.
- On the whole, the campus is well-maintained.
- Library resources and services are adequate.

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- Students are made to feel welcome on this campus.
- Class change (drop/add) policies are reasonable.
- This institution has a good reputation within the community.

Challenges (high importance/low satisfaction):

- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts.
- Tuition paid is a worthwhile investment.
- Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students.
- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate.
- Adequate financial aid is available for most students.
- Faculty provide timely feedback about student progress in a course.
- Security staff respond quickly in emergencies.
- This institution shows concern for students as individuals.
- Parking lots are well-lighted and secure.
- I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information on this campus.
- There are adequate services to help me decide upon a career.
- Financial aid awards are announced to students in time to be helpful in college planning.
- Faculty take into consideration student differences as they teach a course.

Community, Junior, and Technical Colleges

Strengths (high importance/high satisfaction):

- The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent.
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their fields.
- There is a good variety of courses provided on this campus.
- I am able to experience intellectual growth here.
- The campus is safe and secure for all students.
- Program requirements are clear and reasonable.
- My academic advisor is approachable.
- Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours.
- Computer labs are adequate and accessible.
- Library resources and services are adequate.
- Policies and procedures regarding registration and course selection are clear and well-publicized.
- On the whole, the campus is well-maintained.
- Students are made to feel welcome on this campus.
- It is an enjoyable experience to be a student on this campus.
- The quality of instruction in the vocational/technical programs is excellent.
- Class change (drop/add) policies are reasonable.
- Nearly all classes deal with practical applications.

Challenges (high importance/low satisfaction):

- Classes are scheduled at times that are convenient for me.
- I am able to register for classes I need with few conflicts.
- My academic advisor is knowledgeable about my program requirements.
- Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students.
- The amount of student parking space on campus is adequate.
- This school does whatever it can to help me reach my educational goals.
- Students are notified early in the term if they are doing poorly in a class.
- Adequate financial aid is available for most students.
- Parking lots are well-lighted and secure.
- The college shows concern for students as individuals.
- My academic advisor is knowledgeable about the transfer requirements of other schools.
- Faculty are understanding of students' unique life circumstances.
- My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual.
- I seldom get the "run-around" when seeking information on this campus.

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Career and Private Schools

Strengths (high importance/high satisfaction):

- The quality of instruction I receive in most of my classes is excellent.
- Classes are scheduled at times that are convenient for me.
- The quality of instruction in the academic programs is excellent.
- Nearly all of the faculty are knowledgeable in their fields.
- I am able to experience intellectual growth here.
- The school is safe and secure for all students.
- Program requirements are clear and reasonable.
- Students are made to feel welcome at this school.
- My academic advisor is knowledgeable about my program requirements.
- It is an enjoyable experience to be a student at this school.
- On the whole, the school is well-maintained.
- There is a good variety of courses provided at this school.
- My academic advisor is approachable.
- Nearly all classes deal with practical experiences and applications.
- Faculty are usually available after class and during office hours.
- The school staff are caring and helpful.
- Administrators are approachable to students.

Challenges (high importance/low satisfaction):

- The quality of instruction in the academic programs is excellent.
- This school does whatever it can to help me reach my educational goals.
- The equipment in the lab facilities is kept up to date.
- Faculty are fair and unbiased in their treatment of individual students.
- The school shows concern for students as individuals.
- Computer labs are adequate and accessible.
- The career services office provides students with the help they need to get a job.
- Faculty are understanding of students' unique life circumstances.
- My academic advisor is concerned about my success as an individual.

Trend Analysis

The composite scales were analyzed to determine trends in importance, satisfaction, and performance gap across the most recent five years of data. The comparisons on the following pages are presented separately by institutional type: four-year private; four-year public; and two-year community, junior, and technical institutions. The data have been isolated by academic year, rather than presented cumulatively.

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Scales: Five-Year Trends at Four-Year Private Institutions

Scale	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Academic Advising					
Importance	6.27	6.28	6.25	6.24	6.24
Satisfaction	5.25	5.24	5.15	5.21	5.21
Performance Gap	1.02	1.04	1.10	1.03	1.03
Campus Climate					
Importance	6.15	6.14	6.11	6.12	6.11
Satisfaction	5.15	5.10	5.02	5.08	5.08
Performance Gap	1.00	1.04	1.09	1.04	1.03
Campus Life					
Importance	5.68	5.65	5.64	5.63	5.64
Satisfaction	4.76	4.70	4.64	4.73	4.70
Performance Gap	0.92	0.95	1.00	0.90	0.94
Campus Support Services					
Importance	6.03	6.03	6.00	5.97	5.99
Satisfaction	5.04	5.05	5.04	5.11	5.15
Performance Gap	0.99	0.98	0.96	0.86	0.84
Concern for the Individual					
Importance	6.15	6.15	6.12	6.12	6.11
Satisfaction	5.12	5.08	4.99	5.07	5.07
Performance Gap	1.03	1.07	1.13	1.05	1.04
Instructional Effectiveness					
Importance	6.35	6.35	6.32	6.32	6.31
Satisfaction	5.28	5.24	5.18	5.24	5.23
Performance Gap	1.07	1.11	1.14	1.08	1.08
Recruitment and Financial Aid					
Importance	6.15	6.15	6.11	6.12	6.14
Satisfaction	4.90	4.82	4.77	4.82	4.83
Performance Gap	1.25	1.33	1.34	1.30	1.31
Registration Effectiveness					
Importance	6.14	6.16	6.14	6.12	6.14
Satisfaction	4.96	4.89	4.83	4.89	4.92
Performance Gap	1.18	1.27	1.31	1.23	1.22
Responsiveness to Diverse Populations					
Importance	---	---	---	---	---
Satisfaction	4.96	4.94	4.89	4.94	4.96
Performance Gap	---	---	---	---	---
Safety and Security					
Importance	6.17	6.18	6.17	6.15	6.16
Satisfaction	4.71	4.66	4.64	4.72	4.68
Performance Gap	1.46	1.52	1.53	1.43	1.48
Service Excellence					
Importance	6.01	6.00	5.98	5.97	5.97
Satisfaction	4.97	4.91	4.86	4.91	4.94
Performance Gap	1.04	1.09	1.12	1.06	1.03
Student Centeredness					
Importance	6.16	6.15	6.12	6.13	6.12
Satisfaction	5.24	5.19	5.10	5.16	5.17
Performance Gap	0.92	0.96	1.02	0.97	0.95

Student Records: n = 85,514 for 1998-99; n = 92,409 for 1999-2000; n = 77,483 for 2000-01; n = 94,606 for 2001-02; n = 81,165 for 2002-03

Scales: Five-Year Trends at Four-Year Public Institutions

Scale	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Academic Advising					
Importance	6.32	6.31	6.30	6.30	6.27
Satisfaction	5.05	5.14	5.04	5.08	5.14
Performance Gap	1.27	1.17	1.26	1.22	1.13
Campus Climate					
Importance	6.04	6.05	6.02	6.03	6.02
Satisfaction	4.91	4.92	4.82	4.89	5.01
Performance Gap	1.13	1.13	1.20	1.14	1.01
Campus Life					
Importance	5.57	5.60	5.55	5.55	5.57
Satisfaction	4.73	4.69	4.64	4.71	4.78
Performance Gap	0.84	0.91	0.91	0.84	0.79
Campus Support Services					
Importance	6.04	6.03	6.02	5.98	5.98
Satisfaction	5.02	5.04	4.99	5.09	5.20
Performance Gap	1.02	0.99	1.03	0.89	0.78
Concern for the Individual					
Importance	6.06	6.05	6.04	6.05	6.03
Satisfaction	4.77	4.79	4.74	4.78	4.87
Performance Gap	1.29	1.26	1.30	1.27	1.16
Instructional Effectiveness					
Importance	6.31	6.30	6.28	6.29	6.27
Satisfaction	5.09	5.09	5.04	5.08	5.15
Performance Gap	1.22	1.21	1.24	1.21	1.12
Recruitment and Financial Aid					
Importance	6.01	6.00	6.01	6.01	6.02
Satisfaction	4.60	4.64	4.59	4.65	4.76
Performance Gap	1.41	1.36	1.42	1.36	1.26
Registration Effectiveness					
Importance	6.16	6.16	6.15	6.14	6.12
Satisfaction	4.80	4.80	4.74	4.82	4.94
Performance Gap	1.36	1.36	1.41	1.32	1.18
Responsiveness to Diverse Populations					
Importance	---	---	---	---	---
Satisfaction	4.92	4.90	4.87	4.92	5.02
Performance Gap	---	---	---	---	---
Safety and Security					
Importance	6.28	6.28	6.27	6.26	6.25
Satisfaction	4.38	4.30	4.29	4.36	4.47
Performance Gap	1.90	1.98	1.98	1.90	1.78
Service Excellence					
Importance	5.99	5.99	5.97	5.95	5.93
Satisfaction	4.70	4.73	4.64	4.72	4.85
Performance Gap	1.29	1.26	1.33	1.23	1.08
Student Centeredness					
Importance	6.03	6.03	5.99	6.02	6.01
Satisfaction	4.94	4.93	4.85	4.91	5.03
Performance Gap	1.09	1.10	1.14	1.11	0.98

Student Records: n = 46,087 for 1998-99; n = 54,884 for 1999-2000; n = 35,763 for 2000-01; n = 42,722 for 2001-02; n = 36,684 for 2002-03

Scales: Five-Year Trends at Two-Year Institutions

Scale	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Academic Advising/Counseling					
Importance	6.11	6.08	6.08	6.07	6.09
Satisfaction	5.10	5.04	5.07	5.05	5.13
Performance Gap	1.01	1.04	1.01	1.02	0.96
Academic Services					
Importance	6.03	5.99	5.98	5.97	5.98
Satisfaction	5.23	5.18	5.21	5.27	5.32
Performance Gap	0.80	0.81	0.77	0.70	0.66
Admissions and Financial Aid					
Importance	5.98	5.94	5.94	5.93	5.97
Satisfaction	4.99	4.93	4.94	4.96	5.01
Performance Gap	0.99	1.01	1.00	0.97	0.96
Campus Climate					
Importance	5.94	5.90	5.91	5.90	5.91
Satisfaction	5.17	5.11	5.14	5.17	5.20
Performance Gap	0.77	0.79	0.77	0.73	0.71
Campus Support Services					
Importance	5.41	5.38	5.37	5.36	5.40
Satisfaction	4.84	4.79	4.81	4.83	4.86
Performance Gap	0.57	0.59	0.56	0.53	0.54
Concern for the Individual					
Importance	6.07	6.04	6.04	6.04	6.05
Satisfaction	5.12	5.06	5.09	5.10	5.15
Performance Gap	0.95	0.98	0.95	0.94	0.90
Instructional Effectiveness					
Importance	6.17	6.14	6.14	6.14	6.14
Satisfaction	5.30	5.24	5.26	5.29	5.32
Performance Gap	0.87	0.90	0.88	0.85	0.82
Registration Effectiveness					
Importance	6.14	6.10	6.10	6.11	6.11
Satisfaction	5.28	5.24	5.25	5.30	5.32
Performance Gap	0.86	0.86	0.85	0.81	0.82
Responsiveness to Diverse Populations					
Importance	---	---	---	---	---
Satisfaction	5.33	5.30	5.32	5.35	5.38
Performance Gap	---	---	---	---	---
Safety and Security					
Importance	5.98	5.94	5.95	5.96	5.94
Satisfaction	4.82	4.81	4.83	4.80	4.83
Performance Gap	1.16	1.13	1.12	1.16	1.11
Service Excellence					
Importance	5.92	5.88	5.88	5.88	5.90
Satisfaction	5.12	5.06	5.07	5.11	5.14
Performance Gap	0.80	0.82	0.81	0.77	0.76
Student Centeredness					
Importance	5.93	5.89	5.90	5.89	5.92
Satisfaction	5.23	5.18	5.20	5.24	5.27
Performance Gap	0.70	0.71	0.70	0.65	0.65

Student Records: n = 55,571 for 1998-99; n = 82,852 for 1999-2000; n = 83,851 for 2000-01; n = 82,370 for 2001-02; n = 85,579 for 2002-03

Scales: Five-Year Trends at Career and Private Schools

Scale	1998-99	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
Academic Advising/Counseling					
Importance	6.22	6.20	6.19	6.11	6.20
Satisfaction	5.09	5.10	5.11	5.00	5.18
Performance Gap	1.13	1.10	1.08	1.11	1.02
Academic Services					
Importance	6.15	6.16	6.10	6.03	6.12
Satisfaction	4.86	4.97	4.93	4.88	5.07
Performance Gap	1.29	1.19	1.17	1.15	1.05
Admissions and Financial Aid					
Importance	6.26	6.22	6.19	6.15	6.21
Satisfaction	5.07	5.04	5.08	4.98	5.19
Performance Gap	1.19	1.18	1.11	1.17	1.02
Campus Climate					
Importance	6.21	6.18	6.15	6.10	6.17
Satisfaction	5.16	5.18	5.13	5.09	5.27
Performance Gap	1.05	1.00	1.02	1.01	0.90
Campus Support Services					
Importance	5.64	5.65	5.61	5.54	5.65
Satisfaction	4.70	4.73	4.64	4.65	4.78
Performance Gap	0.94	0.92	0.97	0.89	0.87
Concern for the Individual					
Importance	6.27	6.24	6.22	6.15	6.22
Satisfaction	5.11	5.13	5.12	5.03	5.20
Performance Gap	1.16	1.11	1.10	1.12	1.02
Instructional Effectiveness					
Importance	6.34	6.30	6.27	6.22	6.28
Satisfaction	5.28	5.28	5.25	5.21	5.34
Performance Gap	1.06	1.02	1.02	1.01	0.94
Registration Effectiveness					
Importance	6.22	6.18	6.16	6.12	6.19
Satisfaction	5.25	5.24	5.25	5.16	5.33
Performance Gap	0.97	0.94	0.91	0.96	0.86
Responsiveness to Diverse Populations					
Importance	---	---	---	---	---
Satisfaction	5.25	5.27	5.24	5.10	5.31
Performance Gap	---	---	---	---	---
Safety and Security					
Importance	6.01	6.01	5.99	5.94	6.01
Satisfaction	4.59	4.67	4.65	4.52	4.69
Performance Gap	1.42	1.34	1.34	1.42	1.32
Service Excellence					
Importance	6.12	6.09	6.05	6.02	6.09
Satisfaction	5.08	5.08	5.04	5.00	5.16
Performance Gap	1.04	1.01	1.01	1.02	0.93
Student Centeredness					
Importance	6.21	6.18	6.16	6.10	6.18
Satisfaction	5.26	5.28	5.24	5.20	5.37
Performance Gap	0.95	0.90	0.92	0.90	0.81

Student Records: n = 8,927 for 1998-99; n = 10,450 for 1999-2000; n = 13,290 for 2000-01; n = 15,622 for 2001-02; n = 18,581 for 2002-03

Uses of Satisfaction Data

The primary uses of the Student Satisfaction Inventory results continue to be developing awareness and readying campuses for institutional planning. Some specific uses cited by the 796 institutions currently using the SSI are as follows:

- Setting retention agenda
- Providing feedback to faculty, staff, and students
- Marketing the institution
- Strategic planning
- Preparing self-study for accreditation
- Influencing budget decisions
- Enhancing total quality management
- Pinpointing the specific expectations of different ethnic groups
- Targeting specific needs of on-campus residents versus commuters
- Providing direction to individual departments/majors/programs
- Determining the satisfaction levels of special populations, including nontraditional students, part-time students, and students with disabilities

Participating institutions report that a more complete view of their students' concerns enables them to achieve significant gains in their institution's effectiveness more quickly because they know precisely where—and where not—to focus their time, money, and effort. As many of these institutions have learned already, the results of the inventory serve as a blueprint for initiating change. The SSI data have allowed them to move ahead confidently, avoiding the mistake of relying on traditional, incomplete measures of student satisfaction.

Reasons for Surveying Annually

To get the most value from student satisfaction studies requires that institutions compare their students' perceptions over time. Therefore, more and more institutions are making the decision to survey their students on an annual basis in order to provide systematic and immediate feedback to their internal and external constituents on the effectiveness of all campus programs and services.

In addition, institutions report that their primary reasons for assessing student satisfaction annually include:

- Establish annual local benchmarking of their own student population
- Track the impact of new initiatives on student satisfaction
- Identify new areas for further improvement, based on the concerns of the current student body
- Track expectations of students as they progress through class levels
- Identify current strengths for recruitment activities
- Because what gets measured gets done

Summary

Successful institutions tend to share three basic attributes: they focus on the needs of their students, they continually improve the quality of the educational experience, and they use student satisfaction assessment results to shape their future directions.

Making the decision to regularly assess student expectations and levels of satisfaction can provide institutions with the insurance policy they need to maintain their edge in the academic marketplace. Students whose needs are actively addressed by their institution are more likely to be successful in achieving their educational goals and more likely to persist—and ultimately become the institutions' best ambassadors and future benefactors.

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The Student Satisfaction Inventory™ was authored by Laurie Schreiner, Ph.D., and Stephanie Juillerat, Ph.D., in 1993 and is published by Noel-Levitz, Inc. The National Validation Study was completed by the authors in 1994 with the assistance of Noel-Levitz.

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Sample Student Satisfaction Inventory Items

Importance to me... (1 = not important at all; 2 = not very important; 3 = somewhat unimportant; 4 = neutral; 5 = somewhat important; 6 = important; 7 = very important)		...My level of satisfaction (1 = not satisfied at all; 2 = not very satisfied; 3 = somewhat dissatisfied; 4 = neutral; 5 = somewhat satisfied; 6 = satisfied; 7 = very satisfied)
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Students are made to feel welcome here.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Faculty care about me as an individual.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	The campus is safe and secure for all students.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	The personnel involved in registration are helpful.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	My academic advisor is approachable.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	Adequate financial aid is available for most students.	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦
① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦	The content of the courses within my major is valuable. (four-year version only)	① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦

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